

DESIGN

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THE ESTHETICS OF THE MACHINE MANUFACTURED OBJECTS---ARTISAN AND ARTIST

BY FERNAND LEGER

Lecture given at College of France before International Association of Students and previously printed in *The Little Review*

■ "To speak especially of the prejudices which blind three-fourths of the people of the world and which absolutely prevent them from ever attaining a free judgment of the ugly or beautiful phenomena by which they are surrounded. Without this preliminary point, which I consider indispensable, I am afraid I should greatly bore my listeners and not be understood by them. Moreover, I want to let people differ, to make their own decisions or leave if they do not accept the theories that I am attempting to define. I consider that plastic beauty in general is totally independent of sentimental, descriptive or imitative values. Every object, picture, piece of architecture, or ornamental organization has a value in itself, strictly absolute, independent of anything it may happen to represent. Every object, created or manufactured, may carry in itself an intrinsic beauty just like all phenomena of the natural order admired by the world through all eternity.


It is on this very point that we may observe the most tenacious prejudices. Certain individuals would be sensitive to the beauty of objects, without art intention if the preconceived notion of the art object did not put a bandage over their eyes. Bad visual education is the cause of this, and the present mania for classification at all cost of categories for individuals as for tools. Excessive specialization has made men afraid to step out of their own narrow fields. They do not dare to appreciate. They follow the file leaders, professional critics, who, three-fourths of the time, are unreliable. They resort to ready-made programs. They are afraid of free will, which is none the less the only possible attitude in this matter of the beautiful. Victims of an epoch critical, sceptical, intelligent, they have a mania for making themselves understood instead of letting themselves be led by their feelings. They think they are makers of art because they are professionals. Titles and distinctions dazzle them and shut their eyes.

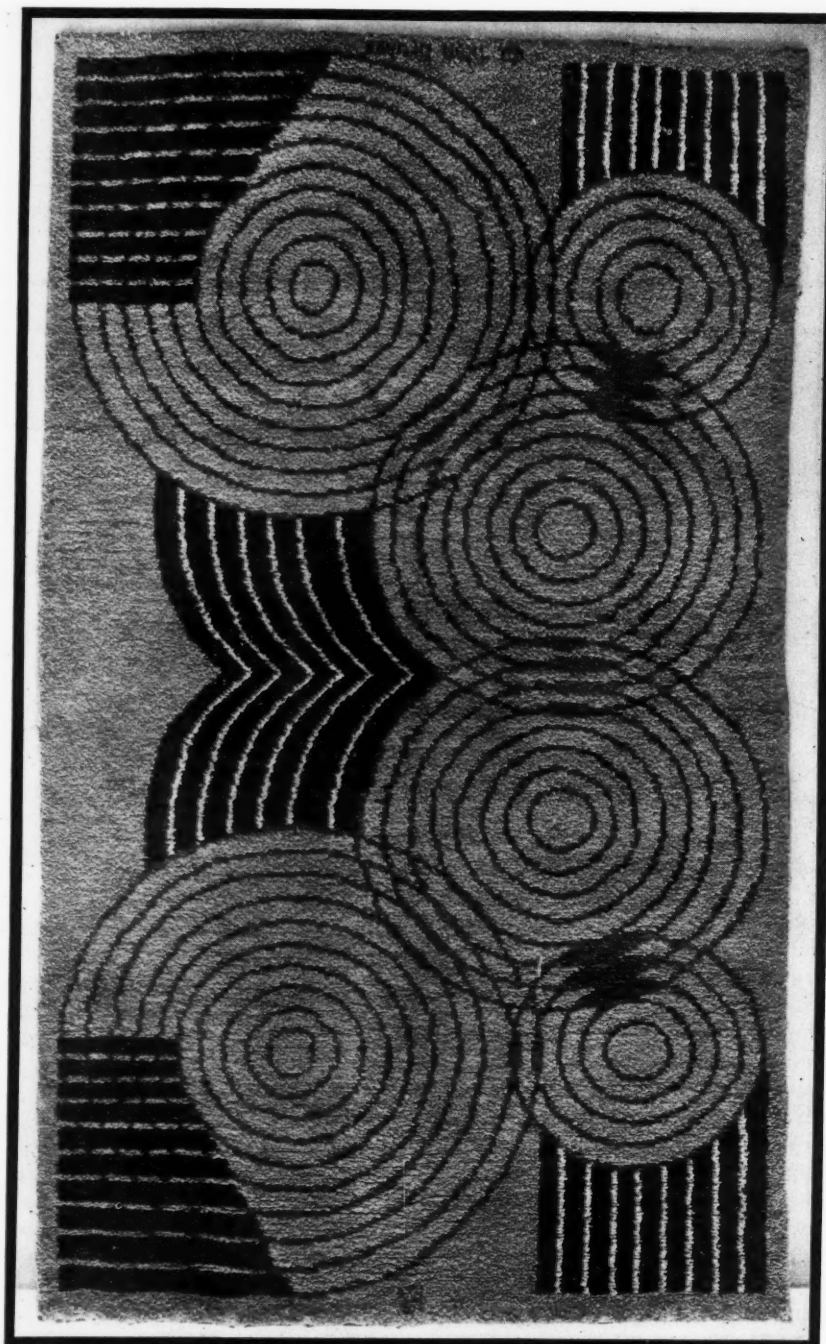
Beauty is everywhere. In the order of the pots and pans on the white wall of your kitchen more perhaps than in your eighteenth century salon or the official museums. If you

admit this type of aesthetic judgment it is possible to reach an understanding of the nature of the beauty of machines. Machine Beauty, without artistic intention is important because of its strictly geometrical and agricultural organization. I have thus to introduce to you a new order—the architecture of machinery. Because the machine belongs to the architectural order it may hold a legitimate place in the world of the beautiful. For all architecture, ancient and modern, proceeds alike from the geometric law.

Greek art discovered the horizontal line which influenced the entire seventeenth century in France. Roman art, vertical lines. Gothic realized that equilibrium, often perfect, between the interplay of curves and straight lines. It even attained that surprising thing—mobile architecture. There are some Gothic facades which vibrate like a dynamic picture, thanks to the interplay of opposed complimentary lines. We can assert this: Every machine, every constructed object, may be beautiful when the relation of lines which register volume are balanced in an order corresponding to that of preceding architectures. We are not, then, in the presence of a phenomenon intrinsically new but simply of an architectural manifestation like those of the past. Moreover, it is well to recognize this and to consider this event with all its consequences. In the presence of a machine which is pleasing to you, which charms you, judgment by equivalents, by parallels is quite natural. It is as fine as the Roman style, you say; it is as balanced as Gothic. The law of equivalents is the only one which governs the relation of new plastic achievement in different epochs.

The question becomes more delicate when we consider machine creation in all its consequences; that is to say, its aim. If the aim of preceding monumental architecture was the predominance of beauty over utility, it is undeniable that in the machine order the dominating aim is utility, strict utility. The plastic evolution of the automobile is a striking example of my point. The more the motor perfects its function of utility the more beautiful has it become. That is to say when its vertical lines predominated in the beginning, contrary to its purpose, the motor-car was ugly—one looked for the horse. But when, with the need for swiftness, it became lower and longer, horizontal lines balanced by curves became dominant. It became a perfect whole. Seen in profile the beauty of the automobile today is found in these balanced relations—the three curves presented by the two wheels and the extra tire cutting the


 This carpet design by Da Silva
 Bruns in concentric circles sug-
 gests the inter-relation of
 wheels and belts of modern
 machinery with all its inter-
 secting curves and juxtaposed,
 against the short straight lines



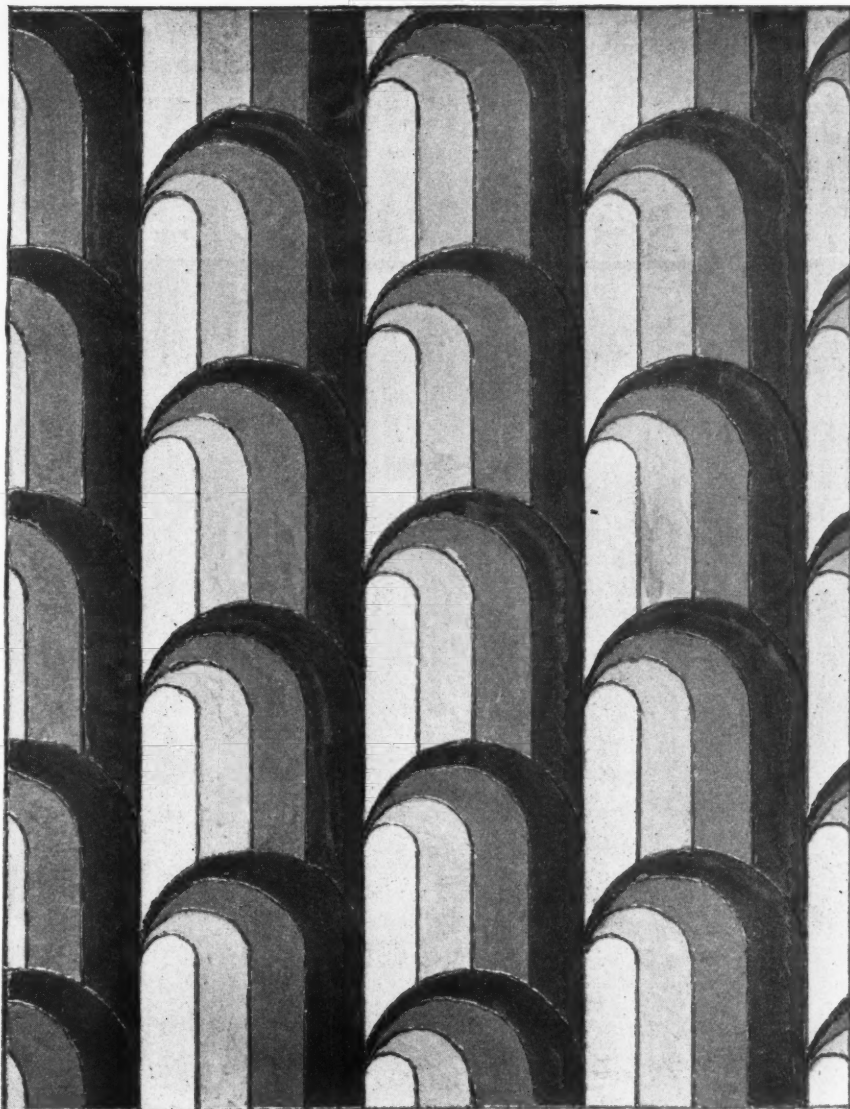
summation of horizontal and oblique lines complete the plastic construction. Under this form certain cars have attained, it seems to me, a degree of plastic perfection. We may compare them to the Roman style which balances vertical lines by the round arches of the windows.

But we must not conclude from this example that perfection of utility necessarily implies the perfection of beauty. I deny this until the contrary is demonstrated beyond doubt. Chance alone presides over the appearance of beauty in the manufactured object. As to inventors, or constructors, they are strictly limited by their purpose of utility. The execution of the perfect piece admits the possibility of beauty, and this execution is carried out to its logical end. It is finished and will not be renewed until after a new invention, which will also demand precise and final execution.

That fantasy which you might miss, that state of geometrical dryness which might prejudice you finds its com-

pensation in the play of light on white metal. Every machine brings with it two material qualities—one, often painted and absorbing light (architecture value), remains constant; the other, most often white metal, reflects the light and plays the role of free fancy (painting value). Light determines the variety in machines. This question of color leads me to the consideration of this second esthetic phenomenon which we may call the advent of polychrome machine architecture. We note the birth of a quite obscure but nevertheless certain plastic taste, a rebirth of the artisan or, if you prefer, the birth of the new artisan. The useful purpose, the commercial value of the object no longer depends upon the color you paint it. Why does the artisan paint his machine? The constructed object, which is absolutely necessary, has no need, from the point of view of utility, to be colored—answering a need, it could be sold without this. But before all this what do we find?

The decoration of a useful object has always more or



The youth of today born in a world of mechanics and motors easily responds to the quick regular rhythm of the machine as is shown in this all-over design for paper made by a beginning design student at Ohio State University

less existed, from the peasant who decorated the handle of his knife to the modern industries of decorative art. The aim was and still is an artistic and commercial surplus value added to the real value of the object. Thus has been created the "objet de luxe" (which in my opinion is an error). The creation of this hierarchy of objects has increased traffic in them. This has brought up to such a decadence of decorative arts (professional artists) that those few people who possess sure and sane taste are discouraged and quite naturally seek out those objects (courant de serie) in white wood or raw metal, which they can fashion or have fashioned according to their own taste.

The polychrome machine is a going back, a sort of renaissance of the initial object. We find before us a useful product which will be more or less beautiful or plastique, but which, assuredly, has everything to gain by remaining in the shops of the artisans and everything to lose by getting mixed up with professional decorators. There should be a special chapter concerning the error and negation of what is called decorative art but I haven't the time and that is no part of my present subject. Machinery, I know, also creates ornaments, but as it is condemned by its very function to work in the geometric order I can place more trust in it than in the gentlemen with the long hair and

flowing tie, intoxicated with his own personality and capricious taste. The actual initial aim of the workman who paints his object is to a large extent a desire for publicity, to create an effect, to increase its value. The colored object catches the eye better. Color has always had a value, like light, to attract attention. Commercially speaking, color is active, which is no negligible point.

The question to consider under this aspect—reaction of the public before the object in question—how does the public judge the manufactured object thus presented? Beautiful first or useful? Personally I think this: the first judgment, particularly among the populace, before the manufactured article, at first sight, is often of an esthetic nature. The little child judges beautiful and lifts to his mouth the object which pleases him and wants to eat it to prove his desire of possession. The young man says, "Fine bicycle," and then later examines it from the point of view of utility. The manufacturer understands this value and more and more exploits it from the commercial point of view. Therefore he has proceeded to decorate articles which are strictly utilitarian. Just at present we face an unprecedented invasion of multi-colored articles. The agricultural machine itself is becoming an agreeable animal, and is dressed like a butterfly or a bird. Color

is to such a point a vital necessity that, everywhere it is asserting its rights.

This fact leads us to a consideration of the manufactured article "beautiful in itself" as an ornamental value in the streets. For after the maker, who has utilized color as a means of attraction and of sale, there is the middleman, the shopkeeper, the retailer who in his turn must dress his

Even interiors of today reflect the power of the machine in their extreme geometric pattern and form



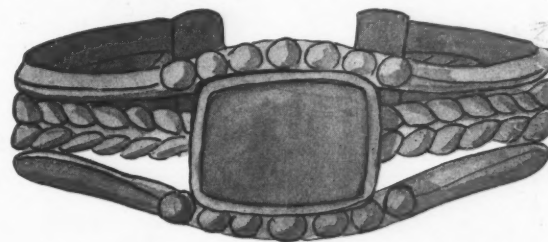
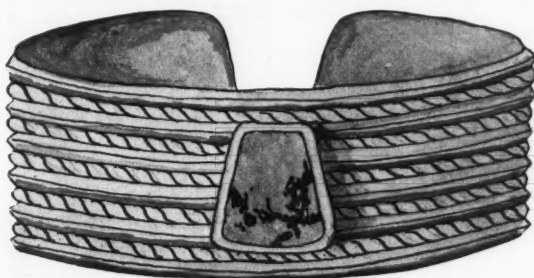
window. This brings us to the art of window-dressing, which in the last few years has assumed so great an importance. The street has become a permanent exhibition of evergrowing importance. The window display has become one of the major worries among the activities of the retailer. One bitter rivalry animates him—to be seen more than his neighbor. It is the violent desire that animates our streets. Do you doubt the extreme care which is given this problem?

I have witnessed this "ants' " task, in company with my friend Maurice Raynal. Not on the boulevards in the brilliance of arc lights, but in the depths of a badly lighted passage. The things were modest—in the famous hierarchic sense—they were waistcoats in the little show window of a haberdasher. This man, this artisan, had to show in this window, seventeen waistcoats, as many cuff links and neckties. Watch in hand, he spent about eleven minutes on each. Raynal and I left, tired out after the sixth; we had stood there an hour watching that shopkeeper, who having moved some article the fraction of an inch would come out to study the effect. Each time he came out so absorbed that he did not see us. With the care of a watchmaker, of a jewel setter, he organized his show, his face tense, his eye hard, as though his whole future life depended upon this. When I think of the negligence, the looseness

in the work of certain artists — renowned painters whose pictures bring high prices—we should admire profoundly that brave artisan working so hard and so conscientiously. His work to him is worth so much more than the other, work which must disappear and which every few days he must renew with the same care and study.

Among such artisans, there is an incontestable conception of art, closely connected with the commercial purpose, a plastic fact of a new order equal to existing artistic manifestations, whatsoever they may be. We find ourselves face to face with an entirely admirable renaissance of a world of artisan-creators who bring pleasure to our eyes and transform our streets into a permanent spectacle of infinite variety. Very clearly I can see the showrooms empty and deserted, if the hierarchy of art did not exist.

The day when the work of this whole world of workmen may be understood and felt by people exempt from prejudice, who shall have the eyes to see, truly that day we shall witness a surprising revolution. The fake great men will fall from their pedestals, and values will be put in their proper places. I repeat there is no hierarchy in art. A work is worth what it is worth in itself and a criterion is impossible to establish. It is a matter of taste and individual sensibilities."



INDIAN SILVER OF THE SOUTHWEST

BY ELIZABETH C. HESSELDEN

■ People do not realize what a wealth of beautiful primitive jewelry is to be found in the southwestern part of the United States. The Indians understood metal working long before the coming of the Spaniard to this part of the country. At first they may have derived their knowledge either from Mexico or from the Indians of British Columbia and Alaska, who are allied to the Navajos in language, and are famous for their gold ornaments.

The Navajo, the best known silversmith, who makes the more pretentious and larger ornaments still uses the crude tools of his fathers, and a forge built on the ground, in a low shelter which he may leave any day. His crucibles are of baked clay, while his molds are cut in sandstone with a home made chisel, and are so easily constructed that this roving smith leaves them behind when he moves. The polishing is also done with the materials at hand, sandstone and ashes. Until recently, when forbidden by law, the silver he used was the Mexican dollar, beaten to the proper tenuity, and molded into the shape desired.

There are silversmiths in many of the Pueblos, who tinker with the smaller pieces of jewelry, but Zuni takes the lead among them and makes earrings, buttons, and rings, which are rather more delicate in design and workmanship than the Navajo's. The tools used by them are much the same as their neighbors, but one more often sees the white man's; and their forge is a higher and more permanent affair. The ornaments thus made are never accurate, as these primitive people know nothing of such instruments as measures or dividers, nor do they make use of clippings or filings. Their designs are roughly scratched on the silver with a sharp instrument, and finished as drawn.

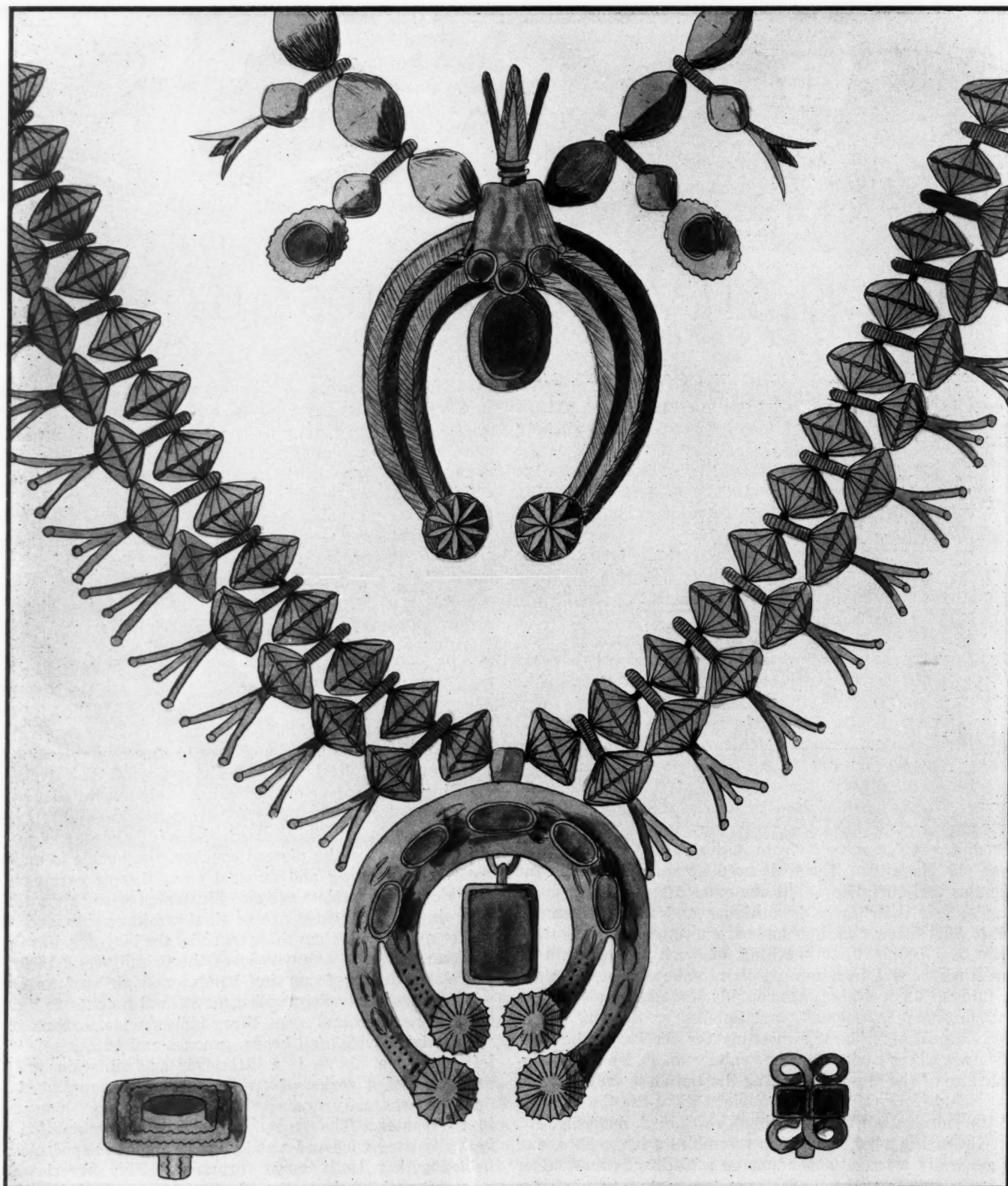
Indian designs have a meaning for the Indian himself. It is not always easy for the white man to learn the significance of the more obscure, as the Indian is very reticent on the subject. Of the more obvious there are the symbols of the sun, squash blossom, cloud, rain, bird, butterfly, etc.

The sun symbol very much resembles a horse shoe, and is generally worn as a pendant on a chain of round silver beads. They may be made large for adults, or small for children, plainly formed or elaborately decorated, but the general shape is always the same. Here are shown two of the more elaborate ones from the Museum of New Mexico. The top one is simply grooved, the ends terminating in a raised flower design. It is decorated with one large and two small, roughly cut turquoise, such as the Indians use in decorating much of their silver work. The ornament on the top is a squash blossom.

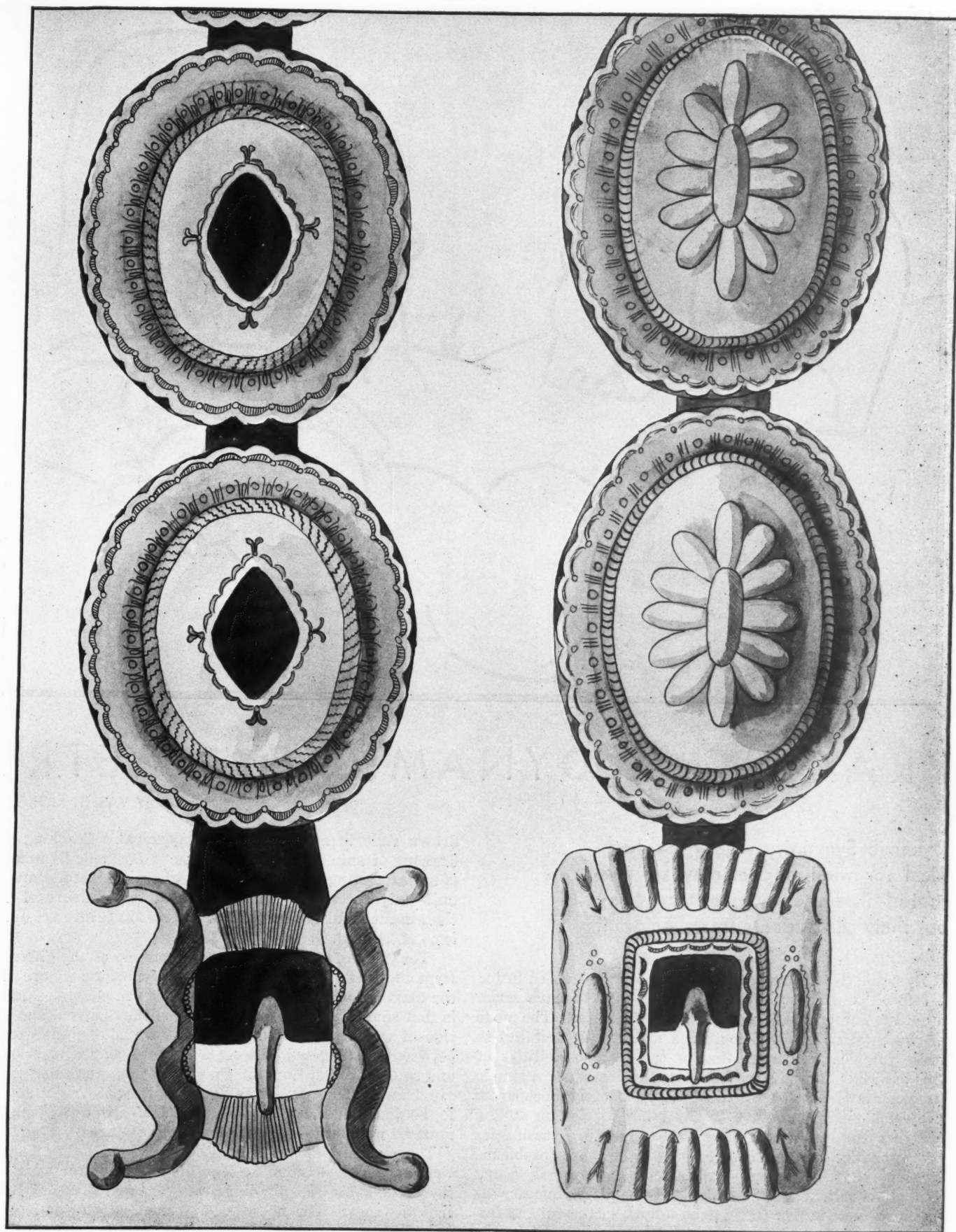
The chain from which this sun symbol is suspended is composed of plain round beads. These are made in a con-

cave matrix by means of a round-pointed bolt called a die. In one bar of iron there may be many matrices of different sizes. As can be readily seen only half a bead is made at once, which is soldered to a similar half making it nearly round. This type is the one most often seen, the more elaborate ones of the lower chain being quite unusual. The little flower-like objects between the beads are three pronged squash blossoms. This humble plant, which grows wild all over the desert, has been spoken of as the Indian's national flower, symbolizing fertility.

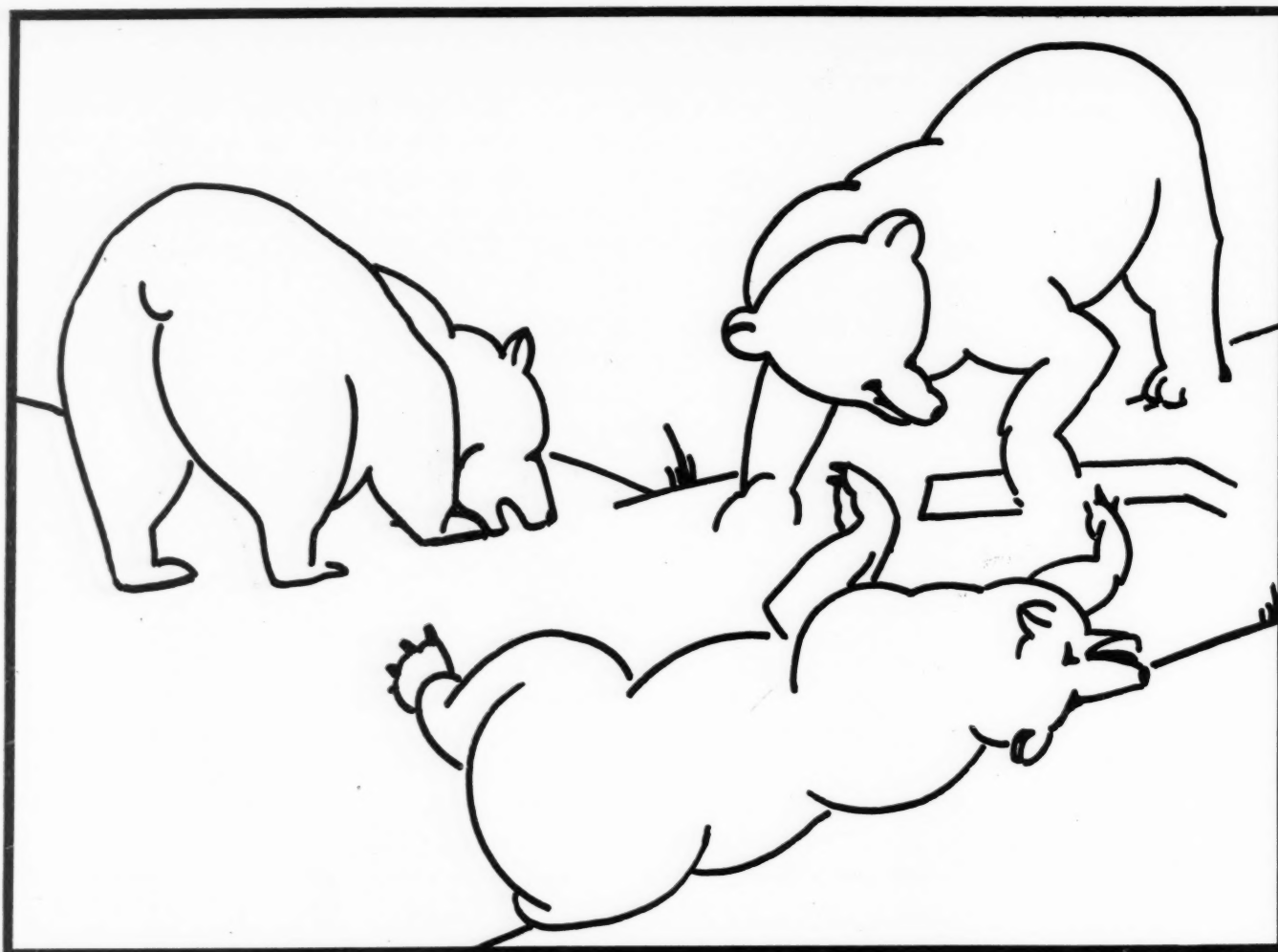
The cross is much worn by the Navajos, though it is not intended to be the cross of Christ, but a symbol of the morning star. Originally all four limbs were the same, the lower one being lengthened probably in imitation of the Christian cross. The Navajos also wear belts of leather on which are strung heavy oval silver discs, called by the Spaniards, *conchos*. The heaviest and largest *conchos* decorate the men's belts, and they are usually sufficient in number to completely encircle the waist of their wearer, allowing little or none of the leather to show. Smaller belts of similar design are made for women and children. Of the two men's belts illustrated, the left hand one is quite old, as shown by the pierced *conchos*, the buckle is an extremely interesting and unusual one. Simple earrings, a ring and two bracelets are also illustrated with this article. The ring and earrings are of Zuni workmanship and are rather more crude than those made by the Navajos, but they have an appeal to one who loves the primitive. One finds bracelets varying from tiny bands one-eighth of an inch wide ornamented solely with grooves and notches to heavy bands, one, two and even three inches wide, ornamented with twisted wire, nail heads, grooves and turquoise. The left hand one, above, is a little over an inch wide, and is composed of a series of twisted fine wires applied in deep grooves, a turquoise matrix of odd shape being set in the center. The second bracelet is a combination of heavy twisted wire and equally heavy wedge shaped pieces, held together by a large turquoise. This bracelet far outweighs the other, though it is not as wide. Unfortunately the Indians are learning from the white man to make all kinds of "novelties," for the tourist trade. Some are good imitations of the things his fathers used to make, into which he incorporates the old designs, for that he is surely to be praised, but he is also making new things to suit the white man, using the white man's ideas. These things, while they are certainly made by the Indians are not in the true sense "Indian" and some of them are substitutes. The white man with his "progress" has done much to spoil the ancient and beautiful crafts of the Indian.



A simple dignity characteristic of the American Indian is shown in these forceful necklaces from New Mexico



Two typical men's belts



PRACTICAL DYNAMIC SYMMETRY

BY VASHTI MORGAN

Dynamic Symmetry usually too technical for wide appeal may be presented in an easy practical way so that all students may enjoy it

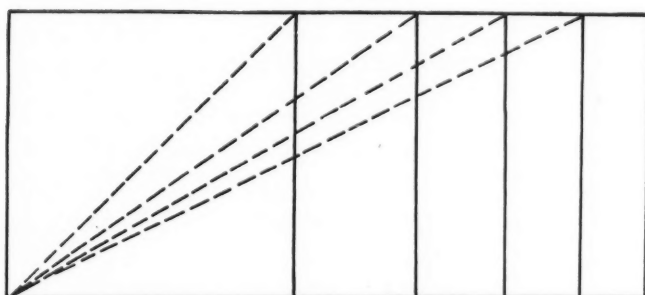
■ Dynamic Symmetry has heretofore been presented in too difficult a manner, technically speaking, to have much appeal to Junior and Senior High School classes. The mode of presentation involved too much mathematical ability to make for clear understanding of the real possibilities of this subject. It was sometimes used to introduce a simple problem in design. This was usually merely a separate project having no relation to any other carried on during the year and leading the class to see no future possibilities of applying this method to any other art problems. Dynamic Symmetry had a pleasantly mysterious sound and an equally vague meaning. Dynamic Symmetry as here presented will be found to be simple, successful and fascinating. Children like to draw animals. At first it really doesn't matter to them if these drawings are quite indefinite likenesses, but in Junior and Senior High School classes this desire is very quickly discouraged if the animal

drawn fails to meet with their approval. Teaching the drawing of animals by the principle of Dynamic Symmetry is an interesting method, and one where the results are so uniformly successful that, because of the pleasure of the class in the results, a heightened interest in future art problems is assured.

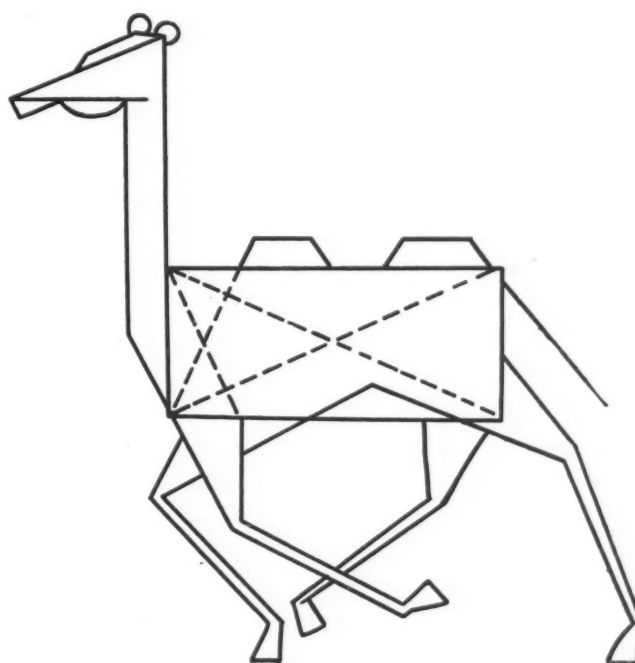
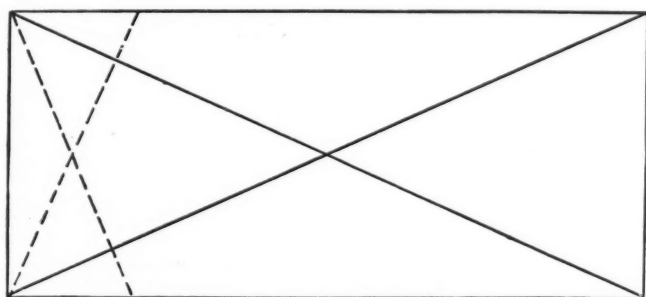
The body of the animal is based on one of the different Dynamic Roots. These roots are based on the square and the diagonal of that square. Root 1 is the square. Root 2 is that square plus the excess between the diagonal and the side of that square. Root 3 is made by adding the excess between the diagonal of Root 2 and the length to Root 2 and so on through Root 5. On the root used two diagonals are drawn. The two dotted lines are drawn at right angles to the diagonal lines. All lines used in drawing the animals must be parallel to one of the six original lines.

The elephant is based on Root 3. In a heavy animal such as the elephant make legs the length of the width of the rectangle. On animals more swift and graceful twice that distance. The horse, deer, camel, giraffe and other animals not built so compactly Root 5 is a good base for the body. The heads are based on a rather long triangle. In the front view cut center line into three equal parts.

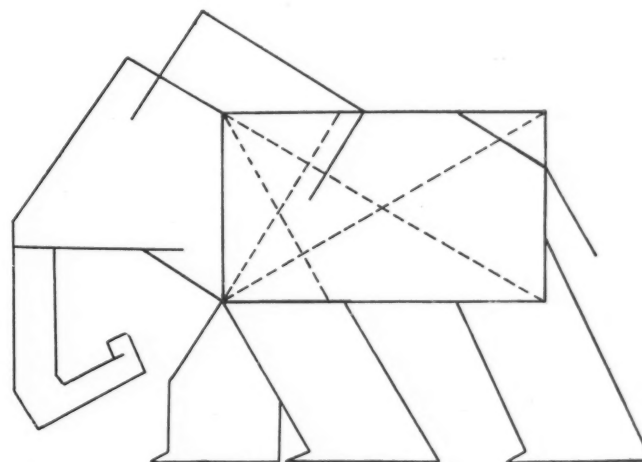
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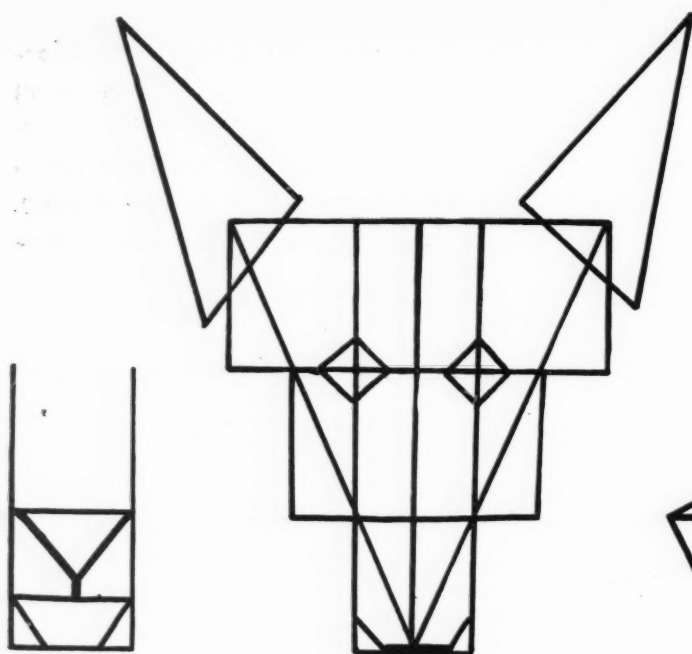


The first rectangle shows the different dynamic roots, the square being Root 1, the square with the first excess Root 2 and so on to Root 5 which is known as the golden oblong, its proportions being especially fine



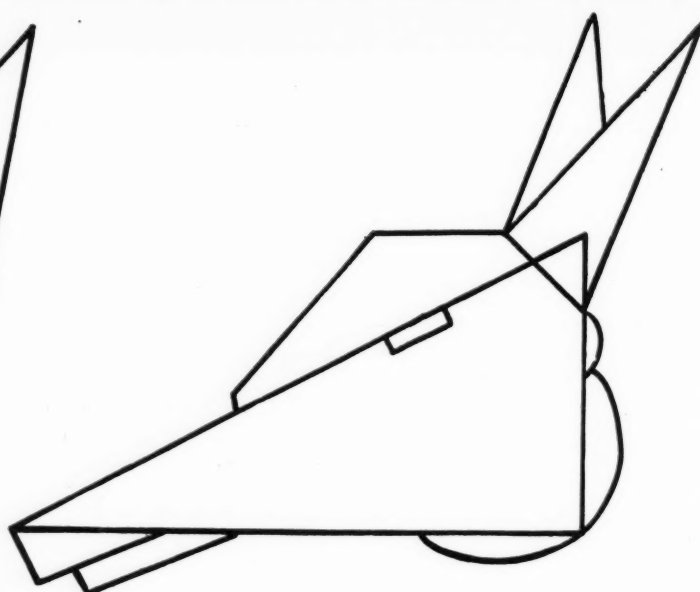
The second rectangle shows the method of using the root selected by having the diagonals drawn and two dotted lines placed at right angles to the diagonal lines thus giving all the lines used in drawing the animals for all the directions used in sketching the animals must be parallel to one of these six original lines as shown in the application of the method in the two animals at the right



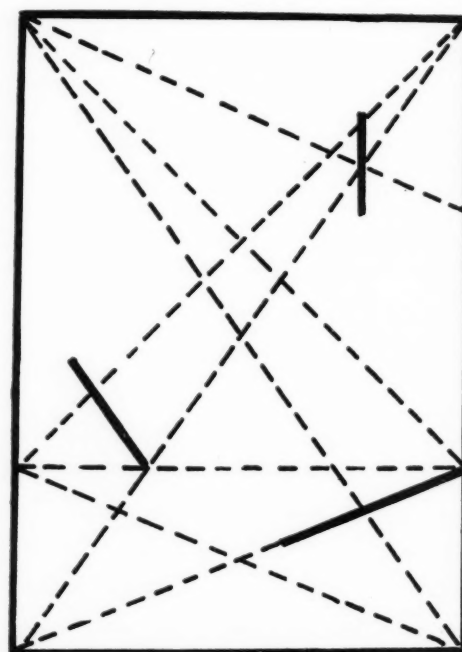
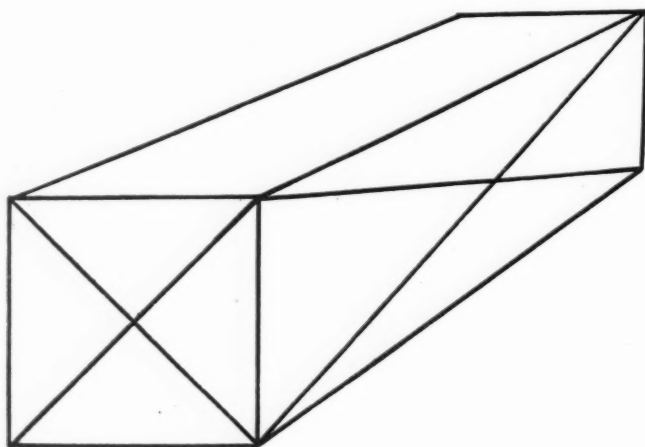


Detail of nostril

Front view of head



Side view of head in detail



To give depth to body of animal
use a solid like the above and
continue to make the animal
groupings dynamic also in the
manner suggested on the right

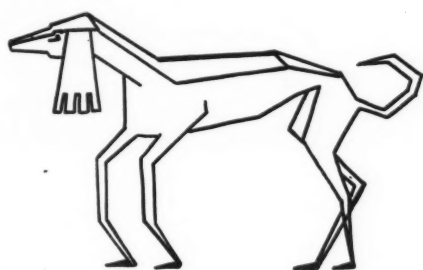
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The front nostril in detail is given. To give body of the animal depth use a solid and continue to make the animal dynamic.

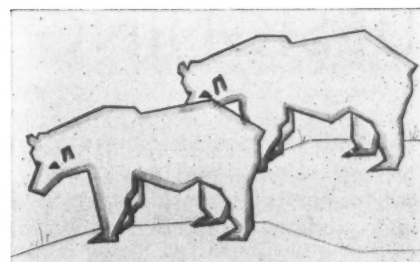
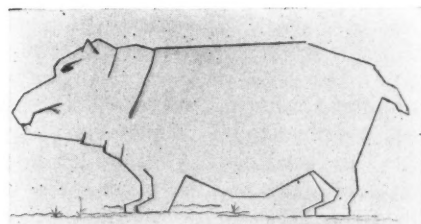
It added interest to have class take photographs of animals and reproductions of famous animal paintings and placing tracing paper above these pictures find out for themselves whether the principles before given could really be successfully applied to them even though the method had not been used in the original painting. This would especially appeal to boys who like to have the worth of a method proven.

It worked more successfully to have pupils make imaginary animals adapted to processes given. It gave more freedom in trying the method. Drawings were then made from animals in the Museum. These were quite surprisingly successful. The drawings may be stylized, that is, the square effect kept in some extent or rounded in a natural manner. Illustrating Aesop's Fables or any other Folk Lore touching animals will be found fascinating after the difficulties of animal drawing have been removed. Book plates, decorative wall panels, wood block prints, and posters, all involving animals, will add new interest to the year in Art. In grouping animals for these problems place them dynamically also. A suggested placement is given.

The animal made by the dynamic method will be found to have more freedom, better proportions, and when the possibilities of animal sketching have been realized the same principles may be applied to human figure, to flowers and many other lines and make the art class both pleasant and profitable.



Dynamic Symmetry gives to the posters of beginners a directness, a quickness which are the vital points and which are otherwise difficult to obtain with beginners



Fantastic animals drawn just after the method has been given are both easy and amusing

Drawing animals from museum exhibits becomes a thrilling experience due to the ease with which students get results

India ink used for free brush work gives a decidedly decorative effect as is shown in the landscape and flower group on this page



A method of designing based on clear thinking

DESIGNING DIRECTLY WITH THE BRUSH

BY HARRIET WILSON

■ Of all the methods of creating designs one of the most fascinating is with free brush strokes, by means of which, very quick results may be obtained. The freshness and spontaneity of this method also make it doubly attractive to work with. A design which has been worked over and over plainly shows it for much of the freshness and free expression is lost and the original idea has been slightly changed several times. We all know that first ideas are usually the best ones so why not have a method by which we can put those ideas on paper without the loss of qualities which are essential to the success of the work? Every one enjoys expressing ideas freely and in an attractive manner, and a brush is so responsive, with it many things can be done.

Free brush work is naturally based on lines, which is the natural thing for a brush to make. They may be very expressive varying in width, length, direction, and general character. A line may change from thin to thick,

wave or curl, though curves are apt to carry the eye around in spots, spoiling the unity and all-over effect of the design. A group of lines, one above the other, may grow wider or farther apart, bend or take many directions. The curve or its direction, may show three dimensions. Masses may be easily painted in but they must be interesting as well as expressive in shape avoiding a laborious effect. There is always danger of using a dry brush technique when working this way; it must be avoided as the desirable characteristic of free brush work is its fluid quality. Light tones must have pleasing relationship to the dark and medium ones. Moving planes give suggestions of three dimensions. Fortunately the size of the brush and the line produced by it do not encourage the production of trivial details so shapes must be kept simple and interesting while variety is secured by difference of line quality.

Careful thought must be given the work as it progresses for erasing is difficult making alterations almost impossi-



This landscape and all-over design were done with pleasing tones of green tempera on cream colored paper



ble. The design must be made just as it is to be in the finished design on this account and the mind should move ahead of the brush visualizing and planning so that direct thinking will become a part of the designing. Proceeding in this manner tends to make one see clearly and directly as well as correcting any tendencies toward laborious working. Often an otherwise good design seems lifeless for it has been tightened and all small imperfections removed until freedom and freshness have been lost. Large, meaningless areas make disjointed places in the design, giving an unpleasant impression. Every stroke and area counts the idea of the orientals, "to think half an hour and paint a picture in ten minutes," applies here. A timid line will be avoided by clear concentrated thinking. With a wonderfully flexible thing like a brush a few strokes may create many flowers, birds, animals and other motifs. Units should never be too naturalistic. Superficial incidentals will often be made entirely too prominent and detract interest from the really dominant features of the design. By seeking the common denominator the true design may be easily obtained. In the examples given here the softness and grace of willow trees, the formality of oaks and the other ideas are expressed in different ways. The principles of dynamic symmetry are useful in connection with this type of creative design.

It might be helpful to copy the units given here and go on creating new ones; a slight change in direction or width will often produce an entirely different idea. Some large panels done quickly, and having something of the

characteristic of Japanese brush work, are produced here and may serve as good examples. Also another interesting and beautiful application is a large, all-over design of the kind which we see on many of the imported European textiles. The units may be started in the center of the paper with the repeat worked in freely with the brush and where it looks best. Little variations here and there will not detract from this kind of work. This method is much shorter than the slow tracing and filling in process often used, although a small amount of tracing to get the direction of the main sweep may be necessary.

As to materials—India ink, a medium sized brush and manila paper. Almost any kind of paper, however, may be used, such as charcoal, water color, or colored construction in large sheets as the designs should all be very large. For the color work, tempera, thinned to the consistency of thin cream, works very successfully in bright, clear colors, and dries so rapidly that it seldom runs. Results are surprisingly good at once, ideas seem to crowd each other for expression making direct designing by means of free brush strokes an attractive and interesting work.



An unlimited variety of brush strokes and design units present themselves to the student designer

O H I O

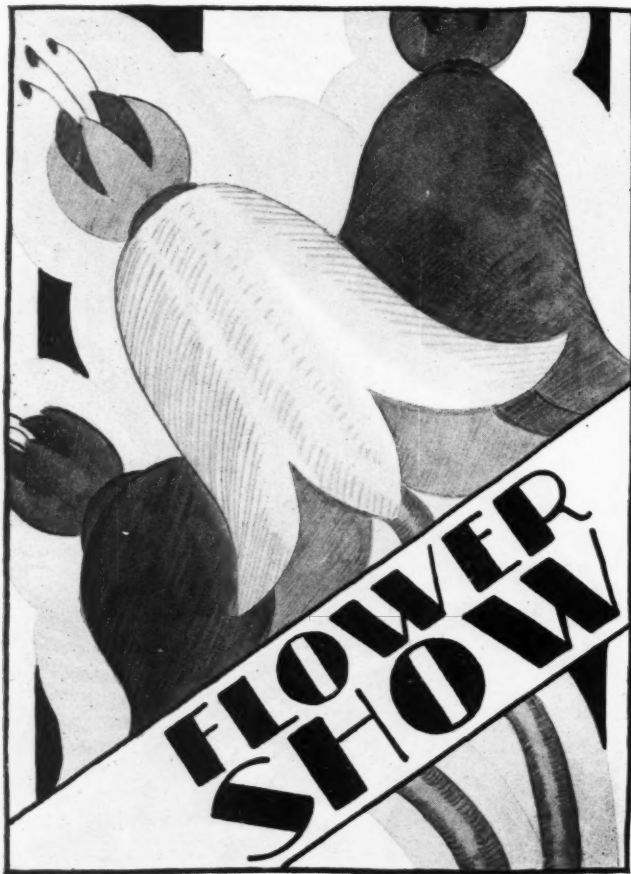
A joyous textile
design made for
a printed linen



Through a very sympathetic and understanding use of the brush a smooth flowing feeling has been produced here by the designer so that a rhythmic movement is carried throughout this delightful all-over design

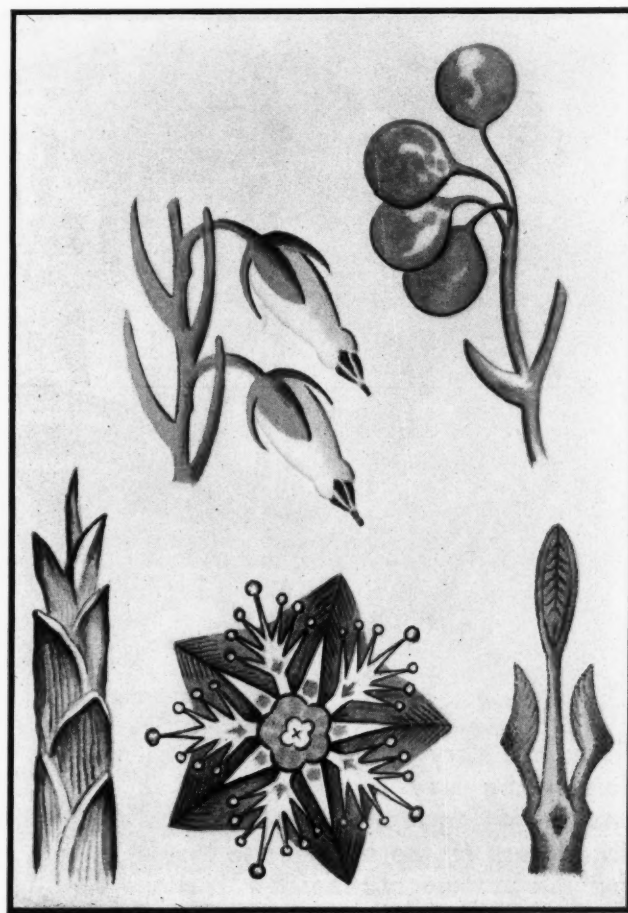
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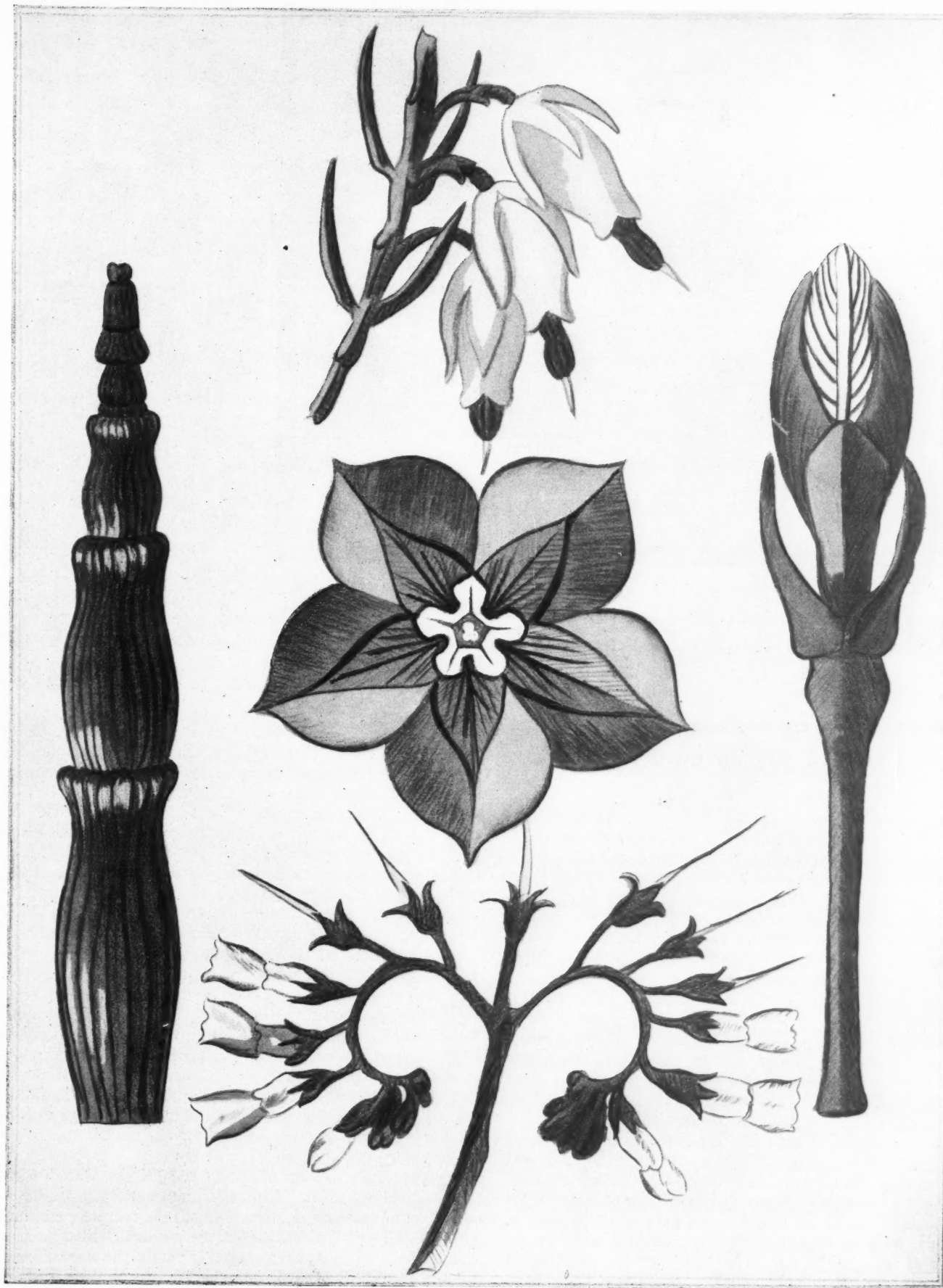
FLOWER MOTIFS IN WATER COLOR PENCIL



This modern poster shows how a striking effect may be simply obtained by means of the water color pencil giving a variety of values, textures and hues being well accented here by the use of heavy letters in India ink

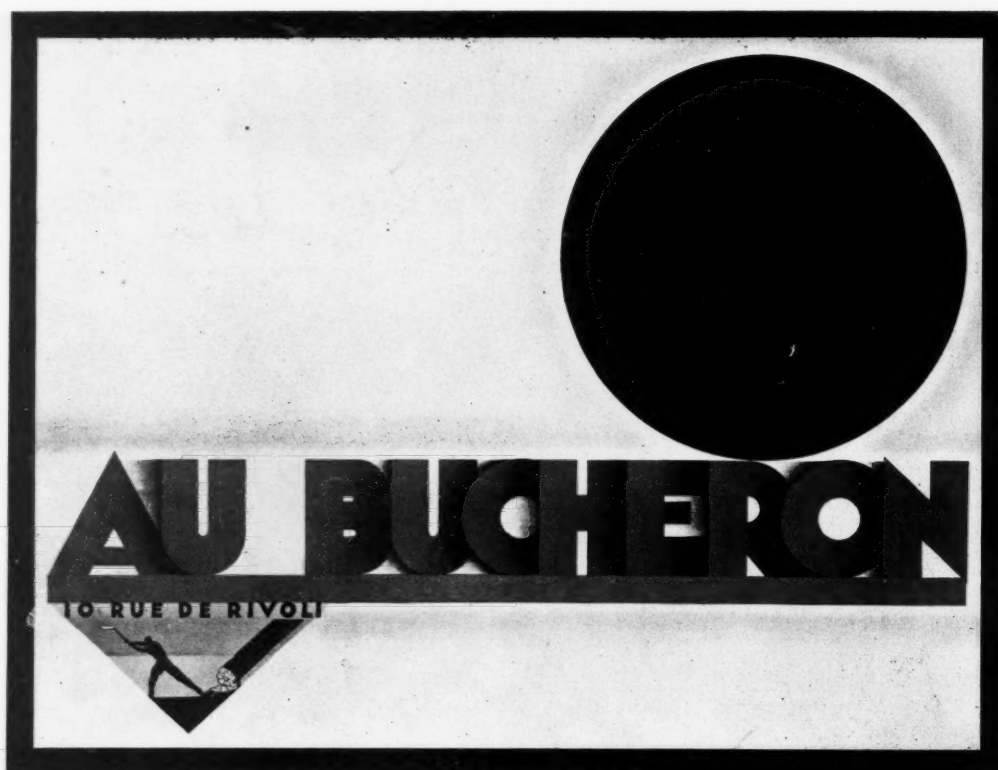
Carefully drawn lines with discriminating use and handling of values give to these decorative motifs from plant life a pleasing dignity and makes it possible for the designer to easily draw what he wishes





Motifs from Nature

A typical French poster of the modern school



PRIMITIVE FORM IN POSTERS

BY BLANCHE NAYLOR

Recent displays show increasing use of simple motifs

■ A promising field of design which receives spasmodic attention from prominent artists, the planning and execution of effective posters, is potentially a fruitful and ideal work for both novice and accomplished designer. The very principles of clarity, simplicity, magnetic form and color which dominate the good poster are those which make it a project upon which untrained beginner and advanced student may each try their skill. And yet, despite its essentially simple nature, extremely sophisticated and startling effects are found in the best examples of modern poster art. The recent exhibition of outstanding posters at the Art Centre in Manhattan gave evidence of the amazingly diverse results obtainable with the proper use of poster colorings and forms, treated in most effective fashion. Subtle but clear portrayals vie with striking, brilliant "blocking-in," but all follow the primary tenet of flat treatment.

It is impossible to give any infallible rules or even to evolve many helpful suggestions for poster work. The making of good posters is one field in which originality counts doubly. There are, however, a few general principles which must be followed by all who hope to gain effective results, and these may be departed from successfully only by designers of unusual talent. The fact that the creating of interesting work of this sort is as yet in a somewhat experimental stage gives to the novice and the experienced designer both a medium in which they may compete more fairly than in perhaps any other.

It has been said that every educated person has a half-finished novel tucked away in an obscure corner. Undoubtedly it is also true that almost everyone with any pretense to art training has attempted a poster of some sort. But there have been certain artists, some outstanding in other fields, others quite unknown for any other accomplishments, who have come to be acknowledged leaders in carrying the poster art to its ultimate perfection in composition, line, mass and treatment. Aubrey Beardsley was essentially a master of the poster, usually obtaining his effect in black and white. Edward Penfield for some time held the rank of foremost devotee of the art, while in France such well-known figures as Toulouse Lautrec and Boutet de Monvel labored over new interpretations of poster messages. Jules Chéret has been called the father of the modern poster, and he is certainly well represented in any authentic collection. All of these artists used the pictorial effect largely. The latest trend, however, is away from the more conventional and frequently boring detailed design, and toward a distinctly stylized art in that it employs primarily primitive design motifs alone or in striking combination or contrast.

However, the general principles which guided the first successful poster artists still hold true in the work of the most radical moderns. First, there must seem to be a certain effect of conventionality. Second, the complete elimination of detail which detracts from the subject. Third, proper arrangement of mass and space. Fourth, the use of pure color to create the needed sharp contrasts. Modern authorities on poster art emphasize the fact that the making of a poster is a branch of design, and not of picturization.

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ODIERET

40.42 RUE CAVENDISH — PARIS XIX^e
TELEPHONE NORD 23.90 R.D.C. SEINE 79561

PAUL
FERRONNERIE
SERRURERIE
D'ART.
Médaille d'Argent
ARTISTES FRANÇAIS



KISS
2. RUE
LEON DELHOMME
PARIS XV^e
Diplôme d'Honneur
ARTS DÉCORATIFS

Téléphone : Vaugirard 20.63

C.F.P. - 51 FAUB. ST DENIS, PARIS

ATELIER

/SPECIALITE
DU MEUBLE
MODERNE

B. MONTPARNAISE

R. C. SEINE 507.054 TEL. LITRE 18-08

BALLY

B O T T I E R



LE LIDO
DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES
LA PLAGE DE PARIS

ARCADES DES
CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES

Tél. Élysées 22-41
22-42
22-43
22-53



FABRIQUE DE BRONZES
MAISON FONDÉE EN 1860

L. ALLIOT

STATUAIRE

Telephone,
Roquette 28-31
Reg. Com. Seine 72.327

ŒUVRE d'ART
MODERNE

20. RUE
PIERRE LEVÉE PARIS

Distinctive French business cards

Continued from Page 114

Such simple yet dynamic things as the frequently implied or suggested straight or uneven dividing line reach from corner to corner has been used continually for implying action, and it serves to hold the interest if not resorted to too frequently. Some decided and definite strengthening of a central point is of course necessary to "rivet the eye" and prevent the appearance of diffuse, meaninglessness after catching the attention. This is supplied in the posters illustrated in unusual yet extremely simple manner.

The Oriental feeling that lifelike proportions are not necessary in interpreting ideas in art is an essential belief in the making of good posters. Understatement or over-exaggeration may be made use of to good effect, and good posters may be of various sizes, to be viewed at various distances. It is only necessary that the figures, forms or objects shown so fill the given space that a true balance is obtained, a blending of spaces, light and shade so that the final chiaroscuro is magnetic in effect. The "carrying power" of the poster is its only possible excuse for being. Some use of "echoing colors" has been made effective in modern posters. The shades used in the entire composition are repeated either throughout the whole or in a small portion, thus giving double emphasis to the work and making it more cohesive and ordered.

The right conception of poster design in this somewhat sophisticated and highly cultured age is to exercise a certain restraint in treatment, a certain subtlety and power of suggestion without being too obvious. For a great many

years there was a definitely limited number of attractive posters, and campaigns were waged against them all. This was largely because industry and commerce gave no thought to the development of attractive advertisements of this type, and the creative artists, designers, and illustrators themselves strictly adhered to a standardized mode.

Since the poster is the one essentially message-bearing art, along with its twin brother, magazine and newspaper advertising, which reach the greatest number of people, it was essential that the "marketing mind and the artistic mind" co-operate to achieve the best results. Surely these last few years show more progress than many past decades. The restrictions which govern the designing of posters have been given full recognition in the examples illustrated. It is no easy matter to fully know these limits and to fill the space allotted by the use of invention, imagination, and forceful execution. The finished poster must naturally have instant appeal, and it must concentrate its idea so that a definite and clear impression is left in the mind of the observer. The use of proper lettering to go well with the background is, of course, a basic necessity. An otherwise delightful poster may be completely ruined by the wrong choice of letter type.

Although a balanced, symmetrical form has been used with good results in some posters, the very nature of the work gives the preference to the informal, somewhat disharmonious design. Restfulness and calm repose are the worst enemies of good poster design. Each unit should be arresting, arousing, full of action and surprise, and of a definitely

Continued on Page 118



FRENCH BUSINESS CARDS

BY MAE MATHIEU

■ "Une carte de la maison, Madame," and you walk out of the store with a bit of joy in your hand. It is a commonplace remark about the French to say that every element in their life and work receives artistic attention. A glance at their business cards bears evidence to the truth of the statement. Several years ago I made a collection of such cards; at that time the chief interest was the lettering. Lettering of such fascination and variety as to hold one charmed. It has been made familiar to us in the past few years by many American magazines, and I find myself held by advertisements that I never read before because of the individuality of the form of the letters.

In the cards collected this year there seems to be a great variety of style and thus they are of greater interest for the students of design. They are so organized as to give a sense of solidity—very simple and dignified—a feeling brought about in many by the use of heavy thick lines. The words necessary to make up the card are grouped to give balance and rhythm. In some the lettering along and its spacing gives the design—in others the printing is accompanied by

a small motif taken from something apropos to the business or simple geometry forms to give weight. Sometimes we find borders made of these same elements—that is, a motif of business significance or of geometric forms. The cards are most often done in two colors, a proper distribution being made.

The small designs accompanying the printing are exceedingly varied. Sometimes it is a monogram or a trademark, or simply made with the lettering, as in the Omer Piret card. Again the location and the purpose of the establishment is indicated, e.g., the Lido card—with the Arch de Triomphe and the wavy lines. We also find decorative detail of the various periods in the history of art, especially if apropos to the house—as is the case of antique shops and silk manufacturers. In these the lettering conforms with the period of the design. Or perhaps the accompanying figure expresses the symbol of the aim of the undertaking—as the pegasus of the Primavera.

In some stores their letterheads reproduce the same design as their cards and many dignified and reserved advertisements are simply a transcription of them.

vases, bonbonnières
coffrets, statuettes
coupes, services de
bureau modernes
serve livres, sujets
sport, félicites auto
dessins, maquettes

RISCHMANN

bronzier d'art
17 rue saint gilles
paris. 3^e arr.
tél. Archives
N° 72 - 27 44
métro st paul ou
bréguet sabin

— antiquaire —
spécialiste de meubles
bourgeois et régionaux

louis ferment

23, rue de seine, paris-6^e

vente au commerce
R. C. Seine 315.281

télé. litté 40-79

Modernis

tapisserie • décoration

divans, cosys, salons modernes

tél. Roq. 28-59
R.C. SEINE N° 410949

6, rue Paul Bert
Paris (XI^e)
(faub^g St Antoine)

**J
A
N**

cuirs ciselés

GRUPE "ARTS DÉCORATIFS"
TERRASSE C
HALL 44

60, rue monsieur-le-prince
paris, vi^e
litté 92-04

**LA BOYTIQUE
ITALIENNE**



■ 17, rue de
Miromesnil
Paris - VIII^e
Elysées 63-15

argenterie, couvertu-
res, châles et coussins
brodés, linge de table,
soieries pour décora-
tion d'intérieurs, objets
en écaille, verreries et
céramiques. * * * *

R. C. Seine N° 275.952

EXP. INT^{LE} DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS
PARIS 1925 GRAND PRIX



GAGNON

□□□ciseleur d'art □□
3 et 10, PA//AGE DU CHANTIER
PARIS 12^e

1^{er} prix ciselure Paris 1903
médaillé d'or Barcelone 1923
— Tel. Diderot 47-41 —
R.C. Seine 117-411

LUMINAIRE. BRONZES DÉCORATIFS MODERNES

Smart French business cards referred
to by Miss Mathieu in which there is
a marked unity of lettering and style

Continued from Page 114

Such simple yet dynamic things as the frequently implied or suggested straight or uneven dividing line reach from corner to corner has been used continually for implying action, and it serves to hold the interest if not resorted to too frequently. Some decided and definite strengthening of a central point is of course necessary to "rivet the eye" and prevent the appearance of diffuse, meaninglessness after catching the attention. This is supplied in the posters illustrated in unusual yet extremely simple manner.

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serve livres, sujets
sport, fûtes auto
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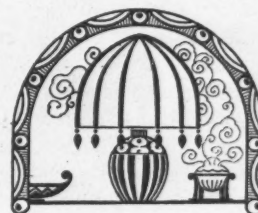


■ 17, rue de
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argenterie, couvertu-
res, châles et coussins
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R. C. Seine N° 235.952

EXP. INT^{LE} DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS
PARIS 1925 GRAND PRIX



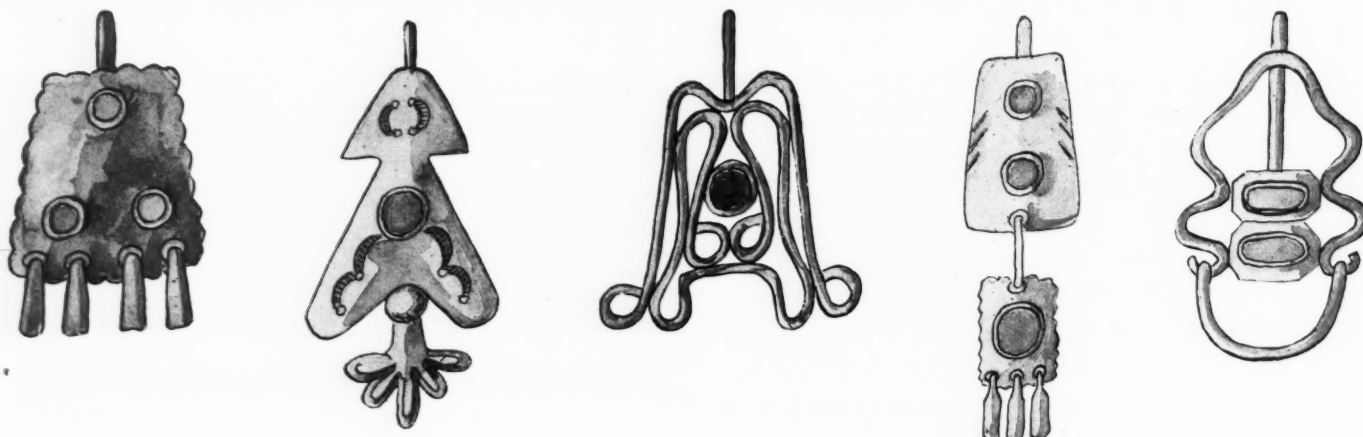
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Earrings made by the Zuni
Indians appealing to those
who love the primitive

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dynamic type. A poster defeats its very purpose in becoming static. As a consequence there must be no predominance of horizontal, vertical or all-over effects, which are too soothing and bring forth no intense interest. Dramatic accents are essential. Authorities also quote "singleness of effect" as a prime necessity for the successful poster. There must not be a straining of three or four elements which distract the observer's attention from the main message. The idea behind the wording and the design must be thrust out to the public as strongly as possible. Poster displays have been called the "picture galleries of the masses," and the improvement in their design in the past few years has undoubtedly had beneficial effect upon public taste.

It has been said that the greatest danger for the designer in attempting to create striking units is that in the effort toward unique effect the sense of unity may be lost or submerged. Prominent artists stress the necessity of finding some means by which the unrelated elements of picture, message, lettering may be co-ordinated and "organized" in complete and finished work. Proper placement is the first requisite for this harmony—this drawing together of the separate portions. The second essential is the relation of size in letters, picture, et cetera, so that perfect balance is maintained. It will be seen that America has recently developed some excellent poster work, although for a long time we stood far behind France, Germany and England in putting forth interesting new efforts toward the perfection of poster art. Civic art of some kind, closely related to poster design, is one of the oldest art forms. In ancient Rome notices of legislative, political, sport and festival events were posted on special boards, just as our modern "romances of industry" are placed before the eyes of every passerby.

The primary reason for the existence of the poster is that "he who runs may read," and the message it carries

must be conveyed by means of the best possible design form for attracting attention without becoming boresome. The completed design must also prove itself an attractive addition to any scene rather than an inharmonious, glaring, garish note. Mainly because of its basic advertising nature, it should be made up of as few elements as possible, all arresting in form and color, with whatever lettering is used considered as a distinct part of the design itself.

A well-known authority on advertising art, Ernest Elmo Calkins, has made the statement that a "good test of the posteriness of a poster is to reduce it in size." The contention is that it should easily survive reduction, and this test naturally necessitates designs of simple form. Mr. Calkins goes so far as to say that a design which is recognizable in very small format, of perhaps one and a half inches, would make an admirable poster when enlarged. An elemental rule to which the most successful artists subscribe is in the use of flat color, and the elimination of useless detail. Another expert on the subject has stated the rule that three seconds is the maximum time in which a poster must register, and this gives a clear idea of how striking, how unadorned with detail, and how strong each design should be. The group photograph of the posters exhibited recently at the New York Art Centre shows that these primary rules are followed carefully in all of them.

Indubitably the poster is a great potential "spreader" of the lessons of good design. All too many poster artists, however, are not sufficiently well trained or sufficiently careful about their work to keep the level of work high. This standard has been raised amazingly in the last few decades, and the modern poster is not only more effective, but infinitely more pleasing and attractive than its forerunners. Foremost artists have found in the making of posters an interesting and delightful mode of working out new designs, notably those of the modern school. A few years ago, the

manufacturer and the industrial executive realized that ugly advertising was a detriment to the product rather than an aid. When this realization percolated throughout the ranks of prominent producers of merchandise they promptly began to look for artists who showed a talent in developing effective color contrasts which could be reproduced in many advertisements, as both poster and magazine media. An interesting quotation from an article on posters by Mr. Calkins, also, "In the past many directors of advertising did not realize that the same beauty the artist strives for, is a force as strong and real and as practical in the affairs of life and business as a dynamo, or consumer demand."

This situation has changed radically recently, and today even the most hard-headed business men realize that no matter how utilitarian their product may be it will benefit from attractive presentation. In a book devoted entirely to the subject of posters C. Matlick Price states: "It is not too much to say that the principles underlying the design of a good poster are no less dependent upon purely abstract tenets of art than are those underlying the creation of an etching, print or painting." Clear, simple motifs combine with vigorous treatments, sometimes verging on the bizarre. It is a difficult task to reach that happy in-between-place midway of the too startling and the too obvious effects. There is a certain subtlety about many of the new posters which is difficult to explain in words. Many of the older types were entirely dependent on explosive, meteoric studies of subjects. Although this general effect may be attained today, it is by less obvious means. Someone has said that the ideal poster captures a situation or "implies a scene or thought in one strong sweep of line and form." Preferable to the mere picture is the particular impression of an idea somehow captured and given to public view. A good poster should always be "dramatic, imaginative, saliently sincere," and it cannot be too much emphasized that the story conveyed by the design must be carried to the observer in an instant glance.

Mr. Price has also said, "The poster must be pyrotechnic, like a rocket, dependent for effect upon impression of motion, brilliancy and action." Extreme grotesqueries and caricatures have been employed but a delicate treatment of a vital message is more desirable. It should not be too serious, neither should it be too humorous, or it detracts from the dignity of the product and the message. Design is the essential element of all poster art, followed closely by color, although excellent posters are continually produced in black and white. All are divided into two groups by Mr. Price, one division in which impressions are arrived at by process of mind, the other by impact upon the senses. The first, he states, is reached by memory experiences, but the second is stronger, being instantaneous and vivid. There must be no indication of a distracting background in either type, for the action should invariably be at the front of the stage, to be grasped immediately by the rushing passerby—all being seen and understood in the momentary glance.

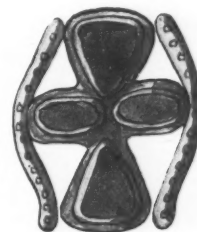
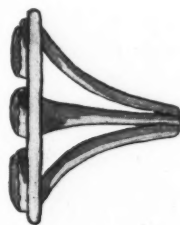
Thus it has been shown that the decorative design so essential in a good poster is composed of two inseparable units, sometimes only one, the picture or object form which defines, portrays or emphasizes the message of the advertiser. Each poster is made to advertise one definite product, and it cannot be interchangeable. It is intended to convey one message in interesting, easily comprehended fashion, and is therefore unfitted for any other service.

There should be a quality of the unexpected about every one, and the worst possible "poster sin" is that of dullness.

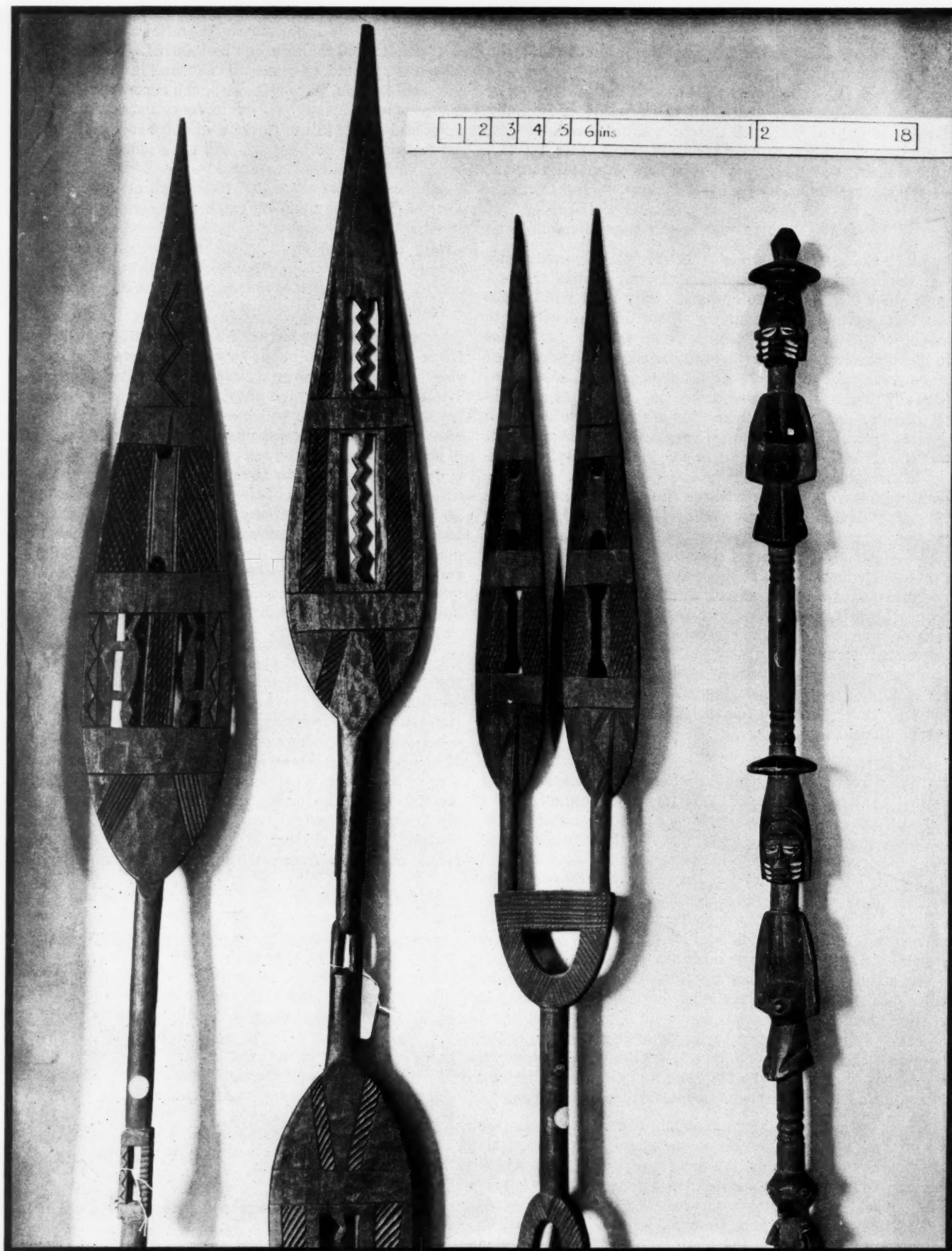
Long and involved stories cannot and should never be told in this form. It is absolutely essential that a quick, efficient reading of the message be assured. Combinations of color tones should, of course, be new and in unusual contrast and combination, but the design, the contrasts of light and shade, mass and space, remain most important. All the delightful colors in the world would not save an uninteresting design from uselessness. All experienced poster artists know that if more than one idea is to be conveyed they should be entirely separated from each other and put into a series. The design is what catches the attention, and consequently its importance cannot be over-estimated. Given a strong design the meaning of the message is doubly enhanced. A poor design can do definite harm to a good product. The best poster artists strive for a broad, free interpretation of what they have to "say."

Many authorities have credited the poster with material aid in educating the public toward better taste in innumerable fields, from personal accessories to housefurnishings. The boards upon which they are placed have been called "open-air schools," in which every observer is a student and some are particularly apt pupils. The astonishing increase in the betterment of the selective taste of the general public is due in major part to advertising of one sort or another, and a large proportion of the credit justly goes to the poster. To the advertising company posters recommend themselves because they are a means of telling a story in every language, and they appeal to the uneducated as well as the cultured, the simple mind as well as the complex, cultivated type. In addition to being the most direct means of publicity, they are in most localities the least expensive also.

A final word upon the composition is that lettering, properly placed and spaced may be depended upon to give a definite feeling of style to otherwise incomplete designs. As a matter of fact, the *rhythm of the component parts is often-times more impressive than those parts themselves*. This is especially true in the modern work, where frequently very simple forms are chosen and given meaning by repetition in a definite pattern, whereas the isolated unit in itself may be unattractive. The more or less orderly arrangement of simple forms is the secret of much of the latest poster work. In abstract design rhythm is the "reasoned repetition of accents" and this has come to be the new rule in poster design.



Rings made by the Zuni Indians



Three carved ceremonial paddles and
totem pole from Sagos Africa and Nigeria